DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 233 260 CG 016 837

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TITLE Assessing Psychology Majors' Career Needs.
PUB DATE Apr 83
NOTE 12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Southwestern Psychological Association (29th, San Antonio, TX, April 21-23, 1983).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Career Counseling; *Career Planning; College Students; Faculty Advisers; Higher Education; *Information Needs; *Information Sources; *Majors (Students); *Psychology; Student Educational Objectives
IDENTIFIERS Creighton University NE

ABSTRACT

Efforts to address the career concerns of psychology majors have traditionally emerged from faculty judgments; little attention has been directed to assessing those concerns from the students' perspective. As part of a larger study to obtain information on students' reactions to types and sources of career related information, psychology majors (N=83) were surveyed about three general areas of career related information: enhancing knowledge about one's self; the world of work; and career implementation skills. Data analysis, based on a 64 percent response rate, showed that the most valued types of information were resume writing, interview skills, information about courses, the career activities of health/law professionals, and job search skills; none of the most highly ranked items concerned knowledge of self. The most valued sources of information were two courses taught by the psychology department, and psychology advisors. One possible problem in the use of these findings is that excessive attention to information about the world of work and career implementation skills may serve as a barrier to student receptivity to knowledge of self. The survey and tables showing students' evaluation of sources and types of career information are appended. (WAS)

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Assessing Psychology Majors' Career Needs

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Assessing Psychology Majors' Career Needs

Ware (1982) described the variety of specific efforts by many psychology educators to address the career concerns of their majors. McGovern (1979) reported on a comprehensive career development program that included workshops, training programs, a course, a career fair and a booklet. A similar program exists at the investigator's institution (Ware, 1981; Ware & Beischel, 1979; Ware & Matthews, 1980; Perry & Ware, Note 1; Ware, Note 2, and Ware & Matthews, Note 3). Our efforts at meeting students' career needs emerged from the judgments of faculty. Little attention was directed at assessing career concerns from the students' perspective. The purpose of this presentation is to describe and to evaluate part of a larger study on students' reactions to types (or kinds) and sources (where or from whom) of career related information.

Method. A total of 83 psychology majors received a two-sided, one page survey. Returns consisted of 64% of those sampled. There were no differences between those sampled and those who returned the survey on the basis of sex, living locale or years in school.

A copy of the survey instrument is attached. Types of career related information included 14 that were pertinent to enhancing knowledge about one's self, the world of work and career implementation skills. The three-component model for career counseling is a common one among educators and practioners. Sources of career related information included 10 that the investigator knew were available on campus. Students evaluated the items using a Likert-type scale that ranged from 1 to 5, low to high

respectively.

In addition open-ended questions asked about the most helpful types and sources of career related information and those additional types and sources that students would like to have.

Results. This presentation describes only the most general findings. Table 1 contains student evaluations of the 14 types of career related information. Each type is also identified as focusing on information about self, the world of work, or career implementation skills. The most valued types of information (i. e., with an average rating greater than or equal to 3.5) were resume writing, interview skills, information about courses, career activities of . . . health/law professionals and job search skills. Half of those most highly rated items consisted of information about career implimentation skills and half about the world of work but none consisted of items about knowledge of self.

Table 2 contains students' evaluation of the 10 sources of career related information. The most valued sources of information consisted of two courses taught by the department and of the psychology advisors.

The following is a rank order listing of responses to the open-ended questions about the most helpful types and sources of information:

- psychology and special (pre-health/law) advisors,
- psychology and other teachers,
- departmental brochures,
- departmental presentations.

Several themes emerged from responses to the open-ended question about additional types and sources of assistance students would like to have. The following is a rank order listing of the most frequently cited instances:

- information about graduate and professional school.
- job opportunities,
- career implementation skills,
- advisors (more help in career planning).

Discussion. The finding that students placed a high value on information about the world of work and career implementation skills has its disadvantages. Excessive attention to those types of information may serve as a barrior to students being receptive to an equally important type of career related information, knowledge of one's self. My experience in teaching a course in career development is that at the beginning of the course students do not appreciate and even resist efforts at promoting the identification of one's interests, values, and abilities. However by the end of the course, most strongly endorse the importance of increased self knowledge. Student resistance to knowledge of self as one component of career exploration must be creatively managed.

Favorable ratings of the department's career development and field placement coures as well as of its advisors reinforce existing efforts designed to address students' career related needs. The lower ratings of other departmental efforts are interpreted as indicating that some written materials, topical presentations, etc., simply appeal to a narrower range of students.

The continued use of several sources of career related information seems advantageous for at least two reasons: students can be exposed to different perspectives about the same information; a larger number of students is likely to receive information if it is transmitted in more than one media. Some may be interested in our newest efforts; a psychology major's guide for career development and a series of video tapes directed at specific career related issues.

Responses to the open-ended questions deserve notice. Variability existed in students' perception of the value of faculty advising. Some indicated that faculty advising was among the most helpful sources of career related information. But others reported that career planning assistance from advisors was the additional help that they would like to have. Differences in the effectiveness of advising can be reduced in part by providing faculty with resources about, support for, and training in career advising.

In summary, a multi-faceted approach based on faculty judgment and student perceived needs is a most effective strategy.

Reference Notes

1. Perry, N. & Ware, M. Evaluating the effectiveness of a personal adjustment course. Presented at the meeting of the Nebraska Psychological Association, Lincoln, April 1983.

2. Ware, M. Re-evaluation of the career development course. Presented at the meeting of the Nebraska Psychological Association, Lincoln, April 1983.

3. Ware, M. & Matthews, J. Evaluating the field placement course. Presented at the meeting of the Southwestern Psychological Association, San Antonio, April 1983.

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Ware, M. & Beischel, M. Career development: Evaluating a new frontier for teaching and research. Teaching of Psychology, 1979, 6, 210-213.

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Table 1

Students' evaluation of types of career information

Type	Value	Code*
Resume writing	4.5	I
Information about courses (major, electives appropriate to career plans)	3.9	W
Interview skills	3.8	I
Career activities of . . . health/law professionals	3.8	W
Career activities of . . . psychologists	3.6	W
Job search skills	3.5	I
How to select/apply to medical school	3.4	I
How to identify career goals	3.4	S
What kinds of people enter different careers	3.4	S
Career opportunities . . . in human services	3.3	W
How to identify career interests	3.3	S
How to identify career aptitudes	3.3	S
Career opportunities . . . outside human services	3.2	W
How to select/apply to graduate school	3.0	I

*Information about:

I - implementation skills
S - self
W - world of work

Table 2

Students' evaluation of sources of career information

Source	Value
Car. Dev. in Psy. (Psy. 325)	4.3
Field Place. (Psy. 451)	3.7
Psychology advisor	3.5
Classroom instructor	3.4
Special advisors (pre-health/law)	3.4
Dept. presentations on career topics	3.3
Per. Val. in Car. Plan. (Edu. 110)	3.0
Departmental printed material	2.9
Counseling Center staff	2.5
Placement Office	2.5

PSYCHOLOGY MAJOR SURVEY

BACKGROUND

Sex: Male Female

Year in School: Fr. So. Jr. Sr.

Post-Graduate Plans (check only one):

____ Employment
____ Graduate school in Psychology
____ Law School
____ Medical/Dental School
____ Undecided
____ Other (specify):_____

SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

1. How often each semester do you meet with your psychology advisor for the purpose of advising?

0 1 2 3 4 or more times

2. How valuable has your psychology advisor been for academic and post-graduate career planning?

1	2	3	4	5
Low		Medium		High

3. How valuable have the following sources of academic and post-graduate career information been to you. ONLY rate an item if you have used it.

1	2	3	4	5
Low		Medium		High

____ Counseling Center Staff
____ Career Development Course (Psy 325)
____ Classroom Instructor
____ Departmental Presentations (Lectures on Career Opportunities and Graduate School Application)
____ Departmental Printed Material (Brochures, Posters, etc.)
____ Extern Course (Psy 451)
____ Personal Values in Career Planning (Edu. 110)
____ Placement Office
____ Psychology Advisor
____ Special Advisors (Pre-Health Science or Law)
____ Other (specify): _____

(SEE REVERSE SIDE)

TYPES OF INFORMATION

4. If you have obtained any of the following types of career-related information, rate its value to you. ONLY rate an item if you have obtained it.

1	2	3	4	5
Low		Medium		High

Information about:

____ Career activities of different kinds of psychologists
____ Career activities of different kinds of health and law professionals
____ Career opportunities for psychology majors with human services
____ Career opportunities for psychology majors outside human services
____ Courses: major, support, electives that are appropriate for your career plans
____ How to identify your career aptitudes
____ How to identify your career interests
____ How to identify your career goals
____ How to select and apply to medical/dental or law school
____ How to select and apply to graduate school in psychology
____ Interview skills
____ Job search skills - how to find a job in your chosen career
____ Resume writing
____ What kinds of people enter different careers
____ Other (Specify) _____

EVALUATION

5. In general, what degree of assistance (sources and types of information) have you gotten in preparing for and making post-graduate career plans?

1	2	3	4	5
Low		Medium		High

6. How much additional assistance (sources and types of information) would you like in preparing for and making post-graduate career plans.

1	2	3	4	5
Low		Medium		High

7. What kind(s) of assistance (sources and/or types of information) has (have) been most helpful to you in planning for and making post-graduate career plans.

8. What kind of additional assistance (sources and/or types of information) would you like in preparing for and making post-graduate career plans?